PIONEERS IN PAPER

The Story of Blake, Moffitt & Towne

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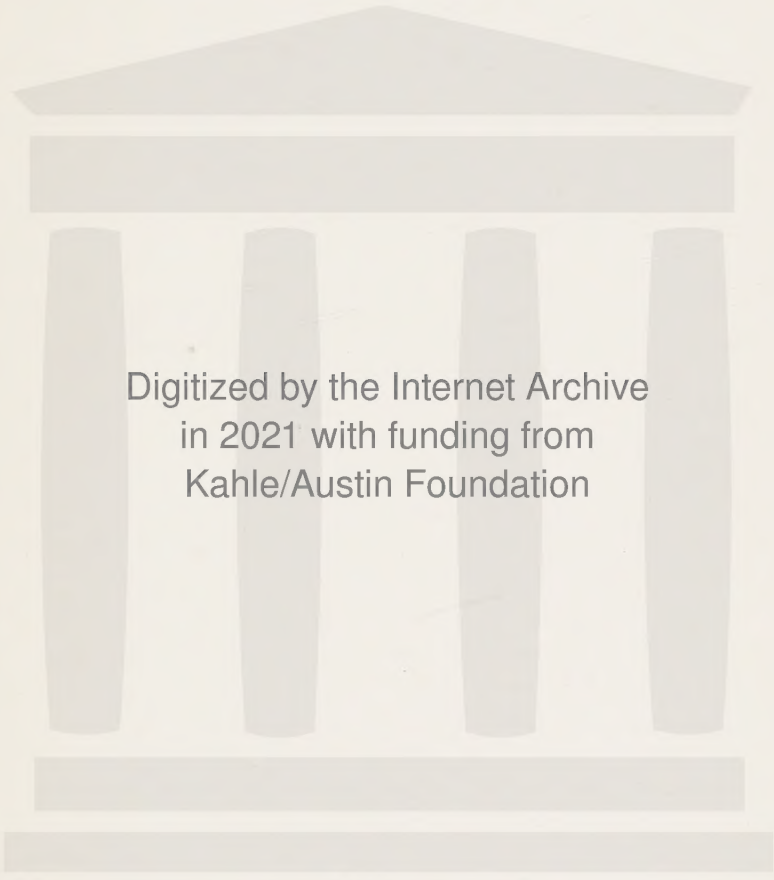
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Roy W. Cloud
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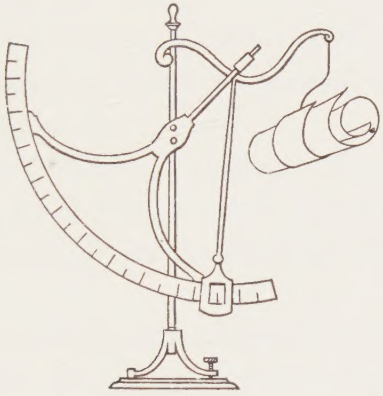
PIONEERS IN PAPER

The Story of

BLAKE, MOFFITT & TOWNE



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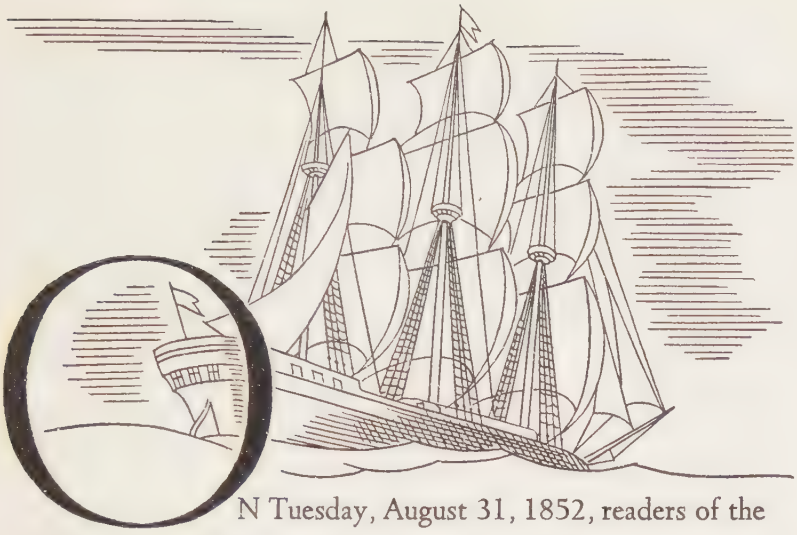


ON Tuesday, August 31, 1852, readers of the *Daily Alta California* noted below its masthead the explanation for its much reduced size:

"Printing Paper Wanted. A premium will be paid for white printing paper. Those who may have it in large or small quantities may find ready sale for it by applying at the office of this paper.

"To The Public. We shall be obliged to continue the publication of *The Alta* upon the present style of paper until the arrival of the clippers now over due, and throw ourselves upon the indulgence of our friends for a few days longer."

Striking as it is, this is not the first evidence we have of the scarcity of paper during pioneer days. On the historic date, Saturday, August 15, 1846, when the first newspaper issued on the Pacific Coast—*The Californian*—was published at Monterey, the editors, Rev. Walter Colton and Robert Semple, drew attention to the many difficulties confronting them in their new enterprise. Not the least was:

". . . the main scratch for paper. None could be found except what is used to envelope the tobacco of the segar smoked here by the natives. A coaster had a small supply of this on board, which we procured. It is in sheets a little larger than the common-sized foolscap. And this is the size of our first paper, which we have christened THE CALIFORNIAN."

Further commenting on the situation in his paper, and using two v's for w's, since his old Spanish font contained none, Colton says:

"Our paper at present is that used for vvrapping segars; in due time vve vvill have something better."

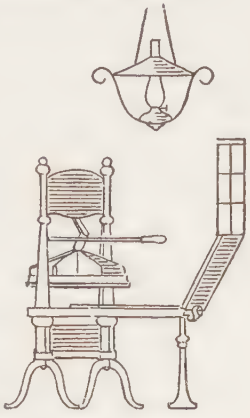
His optimism was justified. A few years later, in San Francisco, pioneer enterprise led another group of printers to the founding of what is today the West's oldest paper house.

* * *

IT CAN BE safely said that few pioneers came West intent upon following their former trades or professions. There was an urge to go to California "to try their luck." It was a time when pioneer spirit stirred strongly in the hearts of young men. Interesting though it is to note that they answered the call of the gold rush, of greater import is the fact that a number remained as builders of the new Empire of the West. Such were Francis Blake, James Moffitt, and James W. Towne. All three had been printers. Coming West by various routes they eventually met in the young city of San Francisco and joined forces to form Blake, Moffitt & Towne—a business organization now drawing to the close of its seventy-fifth year.

Francis Blake was born in Portland, Maine, in 1820. He came to California in 1849, and after several months spent in the

mines, went to Sacramento where he took a position with the *Placer Times and Transcript*. Returning to San Francisco he became a pressman on the *Alta California*. He visited the East in 1852, and after spending some time in Boston, made his second trip to the Coast the following year. On this occasion he brought with him an Adams press and started a printing office in San Francisco.



Though starting in a small way, the business grew and prospered. In a short time Mr. Blake was joined by another pioneer, James Moffitt, with whom he was associated for the rest of his career. Thus in 1855 the partnership of Blake & Moffitt was formed, the beginning of a commercial enterprise which has just celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary.

James Moffitt was likewise a practical printer and pressman. Born in Enniskillen, Ireland, in 1827, he was brought while still an infant to New York City, where as a young man, he gained his first training with the *New York Tribune* under Horace Greeley. In 1848, seized with the Gold Fever, he journeyed Westward, arriving in California in June, 1849. He sailed from New York on a schooner to Galveston, continuing his journey at times on foot, and, when chance afforded, on horseback, making his way through Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. He entered California near Yuma, thence went to Los Angeles and finally to the southern mines. After visiting San Francisco in the winter of '49 and '50 he spent nearly three years in placer mining on the American River near Georgetown, El Dorado

County. In 1853 he returned to San Francisco to resume his trade as printer.

The Le Count Directory of San Francisco lists him as "printer, with the *California Chronicle.*" This prominent early newspaper was edited by Frank Soulé, who not only distinguished himself as a journalist, but who as principal author of "The Annals of San Francisco" has left one of the most interesting and valuable accounts of the city's beginnings.

Prior to his partnership with Francis Blake, James Moffitt was connected with the firm of O'Meara & Painter, a book and job shop, located at 132 Clay Street. John O'Meara had also learned the printing trade in the office of the *New York Tribune;* in fact the two had been fellow apprentices as well as good friends. O'Meara was later elected State Printer, serving for the period 1858-1860 and leaving behind him a creditable record.

To the shop of Blake & Moffitt at 68 Merchant Street went much of the printing of the day. Both partners proved themselves to be men of judgment and ability and both were practical printers—James Moffitt particularly was known as "an excellent pressman." His service on *The Tribune* counted for much during the first few years, for the new firm possessed one of the few steam power plants in the city, and experienced power pressmen were scarce.

Such equipment and experience were responsible for a number of valuable newspaper and publication contracts. The records indicate that at one time or another several of the best known papers including *The Alta, The Bulletin* and *The Call* passed over their presses.

One of these presses had a singularly interesting career. Its story was the subject of a news item appearing May 20, 1866, in what has been termed "one of the most remarkable frontier papers ever published," the *Virginia Territorial Enterprise*, of Virginia City, Nevada:

An Old Pioneer Press on its Travels

"For the past two days considerable public attention has been attracted to the stir in front of the *Enterprise* office, occasioned by the transfer of a huge old printing press from the basement of the building to a big 'prairie schooner' in front, for transportation to San Francisco. It is a double cylinder Hoe press, on which the *New York Tribune* was printed till 1848. It came to California in 1849, and on it most of the early California papers were printed. It was purchased from Blake & Moffitt, in San Francisco, by the proprietors of this paper and brought over the mountains to this city in July, 1863, the edition of the *Enterprise* issued at that time having got beyond the capacity of a common hand press. Meantime, the splendid steam power press on which the *Enterprise* is printed was ordered, and a few months subsequently it arrived, since which time this old press has not been in use. It has recently been sold to some parties in San Francisco; hence its departure. It was quite a job to take it to pieces and load it into the wagon, some portions being very heavy, but it was carefully done and loaded with every precaution, and a competent machinist goes with it to see it safe on board the cars at Shingle Springs."

It is of further interest that this old Blake & Moffitt press did its part to preserve the words of one later known as a great

American man of letters, Mark Twain. For Mark Twain and the old pioneer press were both on the *Enterprise* payroll at the same time. The proprietor was the fearless Joe Goodman and the compositor was none other than "Steve" Gillis, with whom Mark Twain established such a close and lasting friendship.

There were several printers already established in San Francisco when Blake & Moffitt began business. Among them was the old firm of Whitton, Towne & Company, later known as Towne & Bacon. From this competing firm came the man who was to add the third name to the present corporate title of Blake, Moffitt & Towne.

James W. Towne was born in Amherst, New Hampshire, May 29, 1829. He learned the printing business as an apprentice with the *Farmer's Cabinet* of Amherst, and later he became a journeyman printer in Boston. He came to California via Panama soon after the first gold rush, arriving in San Francisco on the "S. S. Georgian" in March, 1852.

It is interesting to note that he set foot on California soil at what is now Los Angeles Harbor. Coming up the Coast the driving shaft of the steamer broke, and she put into San Pedro while a messenger on horseback was sent to San Francisco for a tug boat to tow her the rest of the way.

Shortly after his arrival Mr. Towne engaged in business with Abel S. Whitton, a printer who oddly enough had also learned his trade in New Hampshire.

Beginning in 1852 and continuing for some years "The Excelsior Book and Job Office, Whitton, Towne & Company, Proprietors," produced a large number of books and pamphlets of historic significance and bibliographic importance. This name

(or the one which succeeded it, Towne & Bacon) appears as the imprint on many early items cherished by collectors of Californiana.

Robert Ernest Cowan in his "Bibliography of the History of California and the Pacific West, 1510-1906" lists twenty-seven such works. In addition to this material of historical interest many other products of this press could be mentioned, covering the more general range of publishing.

Charles H. Shinn, student of the pioneer period and recognized magazine and newspaper writer of the West, contributed to the *Overland Monthly* of October, 1888, an interesting article on early California printing, entitled "Early Books, Magazines and Book Making," which gives first hand information of real importance. In it he says:

"California printers in the pioneer days labored under great and peculiar difficulties. The supplies of paper, ink and type were subject to all the delays and expenses of the Cape Horn or Isthmus routes, and skilled workmen were scarce, and apt to throw down their composing sticks and rush to the mines at each favorable rumor. On the other hand, the public was willing to pay well for work, and the rewards of the business were commensurate to the risks. The printers and publishers of the early days were a picked group of men, fertile in resources, energetic in execution, most of them young; and some of the books they printed under frontier difficulties would do credit to the houses of the present day . . . .

"It is exceedingly difficult to obtain data about the earliest publications in San Francisco or the earliest firms of printers and binders. There have been so many changes, the records are

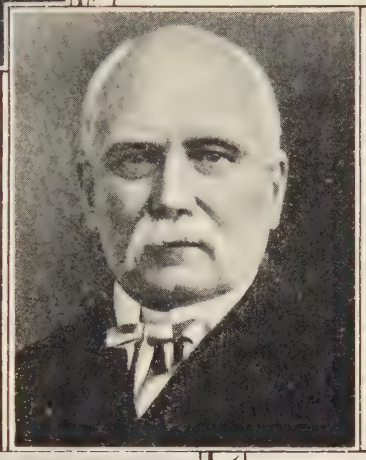
so deficient, and so many fires swept the ill-built shanties of pioneer San Francisco, that book after book of which one hears is not to be found in any second-hand store or library. It was less than forty years ago, and yet there are irretrievable losses! . . .

"Indeed, the fragmentary nature of all these collections is a source of surprise and regret to investigators. Early California books and periodicals are exceedingly rare, and will be of great value. Collectors should investigate the interior towns, especially the old mining towns, and try to unearth whatever of value may yet remain. This scarcity extends to a very recent date, measured in years. The first series of *The Overland Monthly*, 1868-1875, is already rare, and all the first editions of books published in the State previous to 1870 are more or less hard to obtain. Some day the rarest and most precious bibliographical treasures in America will be entitled 'Early Pacific Coast Publications, 1840-1880,' or something to that effect."

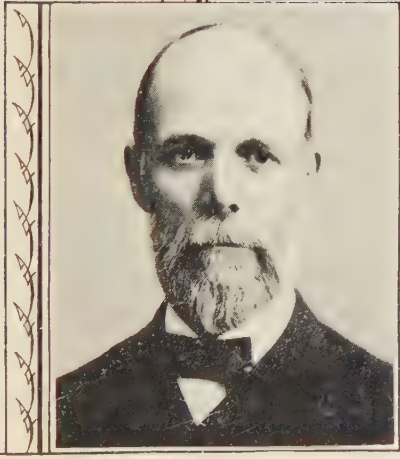
Some of the imprints of Whitton, Towne & Company and Towne & Bacon, which today are rather scarce, receive special mention:

". . . One quite rare little book, 4½ by 6 inches, black cloth, plain gilt lettering, which is entitled 'Sandwich Islands, Past and Present,' was written here by Rev. T. Dwight Hunt in 1852, and printed at the presses of Whitton, Towne & Company, Excelsior Office, 128 Clay Street, where it was also bound. There are 189 pages of letter press, besides title and preface, and the missionary view of the early history of the Hawaiian Islands and the conversion

FRANCIS BLAKE



JAMES MOFFITT



JAMES W TOWNE

The Three Founders of Blake, Moffitt & Towne

of their people has never been more clearly stated. The work is still of historical value, and is very readable. T. Dwight Hunt came to California from Honolulu in 1848, and became pastor of the First Congregational Church. . . .

"Arthur and Charles Nahl, true to that training in athletics which every German knows something of, published in 1863, through A. Rosenfield, a large quarto of 'Instructions in Gymnastics,' whose title page was very attractive. Towne & Bacon were the printers, and the work was dedicated to the San Francisco Olympic Club. It contained several hundred illustrations from drawings by the authors. Edward Bosqui bound this book in half calf, with gilt borders and inlaid title. The plates were made and all the work done in this city, and the result was a valuable manual, which was far in advance of the time, and only needed pushing to make it widely known. There is something very quaint about the wide margins of this interesting quarto; its old-fashioned rules about each page, and its German script initials. . . .

"It was in 1867 that Towne & Bacon, the famous old firm at first Whitton, Towne & Company, then Towne & Bacon, issued Harte's 'Lost Galleon.' His 'Outcroppings,' a volume of poetic selections which had offended many literary cliques, had brought Mr. Harte into notice, and his 'Lost Galleon' made it certain that a new writer of rare promise was in the field. It is hardly too much to say that a few volumes of verses by several young persons appearing in 1866 and 1867 prepared the way for the establishment of a Pacific Coast magazine the following year.

"Bret Harte's ghostly tale of 'The Lost Galleon' was a pretty duodecimo of 105 pages. This volume, as we have said, every-

one here read, nearly a quarter of a century ago, with the sense of having discovered a real poet in hurrying San Francisco, before the finish and beauty of his early work in the *Overland* had introduced him to the world. Bret Harte is now become a tradition to the Californian. Unlike the other writers of the Pacific Coast, he has not simply drifted away from us, but has frankly and avowedly left us forever, and seemingly without regrets or interest. His work here can be viewed without fear or favor, as the work of one who is as apart from us as if he were no more living. But even viewed thus dispassionately twenty-one years after its first impression was made, 'The Lost Galleon' does not fail to renew the charm we all felt in it at the time. We can see now that the patriotic poems of Mr. Harte have no particular value, but the Spanish-Californian studies, such as this of the lost galleon, are far better. This saintly Flying Dutchman, for three hundred years compelled to cruise around the South Seas, trying to cross the 180th degree on the ninth of May, is one of those vivid conceptions that the right man would make into a weird novel, and that any artist would be proud to be asked to illustrate. . . .

"John W. Dwinelle's 'Colonial History of San Francisco' included his 'Address Before the California Pioneers,' which had been printed by Sterett & Cubery. The frontispiece was a view of the Presidio in 1830. Towne & Bacon printed the History, which had grown from a legal brief to a pamphlet, and thence to a notable volume, which still remains as a monument of painstaking research among the archives of the pueblo of San Francisco from its foundation in 1776. . . .

"Another of the old books, which sold throughout the United

States, and is marked as rare on the catalogues, is Theodore H. Hittell's 'Adventures of James Capen Adams, Mountaineer and Grizzly Bear Hunter of California.' There seems to have been the making of a series of frontier novels in the reminiscences of the old grizzly-fighter. Aimard or Dumas would make twenty volumes out of the material. But this duodecimo of three hundred and seventy-eight pages, illustrated by wood engravings of Eastman's and Loomis's from Nahl's best designs has hardly wasted a word. It deserves reprinting for the boys of California. Grizzly hunting in Alameda County; elk shooting in the San Joaquin Valley; stories of buffaloes and antelopes, and other large game animals, roving where railroads now run and cities stand —these are worth reading, even if one is no longer a boy. Nahl, with all his studies of the grizzly, never created better grizzly types than in the illustrations to this book. It was another of the Towne & Bacon prints, and the date of its appearance was 1860. . . .

"One of the handsomely bound books of 1865 was J. Henry Rodgers' 'The California Hundred.' This was issued from the Towne & Bacon presses, a small duodecimo of one hundred pages, and charmingly bound in full russia, tooled in broad lines about the panel, and with an acorn design on the back. Col. Baker and the California Battalion are celebrated in the poem, which has been a favorite gift book. . . ."

No story of this early printing firm of Whitton, Towne & Company would be complete without mention of its activities in the newspaper publishing field. When C. A. Gerberding and James King of William started the *San Francisco Bulletin* in October, 1855, they established a journal which has lasted

until today, its present title being the *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*. Associated with these two men was Abel Whitton who owned a one-third interest in the enterprise and the paper was printed each day in the plant of Whitton, Towne & Company. For his share in the newspaper, he received an annual income amounting to $5,000—"a very fine thing for Mr. Whitton"—quaintly observes an old letter.

A very fine thing *The Bulletin* also proved to be for the citizens of San Francisco, for in James King of William the community had a fearless champion of clean government in a city rapidly becoming notorious for its lawlessness. King fell, the victim of an assassin's bullet. At once an important and colorful chapter was written in the history of the West with the formation and activities of the Vigilance Committee of 1856.

Following the death of King, *The Bulletin* ceased to be printed by Whitton, Towne & Company. Other newspapers came into the plant, however; among them one which the press of the day characterized as a "strange looking journal," *The Oriental*, or *Tung-Ngai-San-Luk*, a weekly printed in English on one side and Chinese on the other. First issued in January, 1855, and "devoted to information relating to the Chinese people, the Eastern World and the Promotion of Christianity," it was one of the earliest newspapers of its kind in America.

Perhaps the most important venture of the firm was the founding of the first newspaper in British Columbia on June 25, 1858, when J. W. Towne Company began publication of *The Victoria Gazette*. It was the time of the Frazer River boom; gold had been discovered, and California pioneers, again feeling the urge, left in large numbers for the new "diggings." To this "North-

ern El Dorado" went the pioneer printer, J. W. Towne, to establish the new journal. *The San Francisco Bulletin* of June 12th tells the story:

"By the Steamer Panama which leaves this port today, go three old Californians—Messrs. H. C. Williston, Columbus Bartlett, and James W. Towne—who take with them a complete printing office with the intention of starting immediately upon their arrival at Victoria, V. I., a semi-weekly newspaper to be called *The North American*. Mr. Towne is a partner in the well known publishing firm in this city of Whitton, Towne & Company. Mr. Bartlett was formerly one of the proprietors and conductors of the *Evening News* of this city, and more recently was the Sacramento correspondent of *The Bulletin*. Mr. Williston is well known as a writer of ability and tact, by his numerous contributions to the press of this State. For many years he was editor of the *Wide West*. All these gentlemen have been bred to the newspaper business, are practical men, and have experience to enable them to command success in their new enterprise. They have determined to be the first on the ground and we hope that their promptness and energy will meet with success."

No better picture can be drawn of the early days of *The Victoria Gazette*, as the paper was finally named, than to quote the editorial appearing in the *Victoria Daily Times* of Wednesday, October 19, 1887. On that date, twenty-nine years after his newspaper days in British Columbia, Mr. Towne, accompanied by his wife, revisited Victoria, and *The Times* took occasion to comment as follows:

He Was The First

The First Newspaper Publisher in Victoria Visits the City After an Absence of Twenty-nine Years

"Mr. and Mrs. Towne, of East Orange, New Jersey, were amongst the passengers from the Sound yesterday. They are on their way East, and go over the Canadian Pacific. The visit of Mr. Towne is one of more than ordinary interest. He it was, in the early days of 1858, who published the first newspaper ever printed in Victoria, or in British Columbia. Arriving here in May (June), 1858, from San Francisco, he brought with him a complete outfit for the publication of a newspaper as well as editors and compositors. The name of the paper was *The Gazette*, its editors being Messrs. H. C. Williston and Columbus Bartlett. The edition at first was a weekly one, printed on a No. 4 Washington hand press. It was a quarto sheet of 14 by 21 inches—a little more than half the size of *The Daily Times*. For seven weeks *The Gazette* was issued as a weekly, but thereafter a daily edition was added. People at that day were flocking to Victoria and the Fraser River gold fields in thousands. *The Gazette* was sold at twenty-five cents per copy or fifty cents delivered by the week. From the first it was a paying concern, as it was well patronized by advertisers. With the change to a daily from the weekly, Mr. Towne imported an Adams power platen press from a book publishing house in San Francisco. . . . Having established the concern on a sound and paying financial basis, Mr. Towne, after a residence of seven weeks in Victoria left for the south, having sold out his interest in the concern to Messrs. Williston and Bartlett, taking with him in gold dust the cost of

the office, barring the price of the press, which had just been set up and put in operation. The circulation of *The Gazette* a few days after its appearance as a morning paper had reached 1,200 copies. In a short time its popularity began to decay and subsequently it was merged into *The Colonist*.* Mr. Towne with great vividness and good humor describes the scenes to be witnessed in Victoria in these early days. Tents were pitched on Beacon Hill, and wherever else there was an opening in the woods large enough to allow of one being put up. So eager were people for a sight of the yellow dust and its possession, and the accumulation of wealth, that they were easily satisfied with anything in the shape of sleeping accommodation. Mr. Towne's bed during his stay in Victoria consisted of the soft side of a dirty, muddy plank floor; the back of a reversed chair forming his pillow and the rafters, through which could be seen the sun, moon and stars, his canopy. Meals were furnished in several houses and served the hungry in various ways, cooked and prepared as varied as are the rays of the rainbow. Tables and chairs were an unknown luxury. Rough, undressed boards formed the counter, and on these the meals were served and the appetites of the voracious to appease; all having to stand whilst eating. The restaurants, although constructed of rough boards, were regarded as the best buildings in the embryo city. The leading one had been erected and was owned by a Mr. W. V. Wells, a Californian, who was also a newspaper Bohemian. This gentleman, along with others, chartered a small tug or steamer, crossed the gulf and made the ascent of the Fraser as far as Hill's bar, with provisions, to prospect the country, as well as the several gold

*"The *Gazette* was never merged in the *Colonist*."—*Daily Standard*, Victoria, October 20, 1887.

bearing bars on that stream. These were the days of the Fraser River gold excitement; days when everyone was making money so fast that silver dollars and four-bit pieces were deemed too vulgar and valueless coin to be picked off the street."

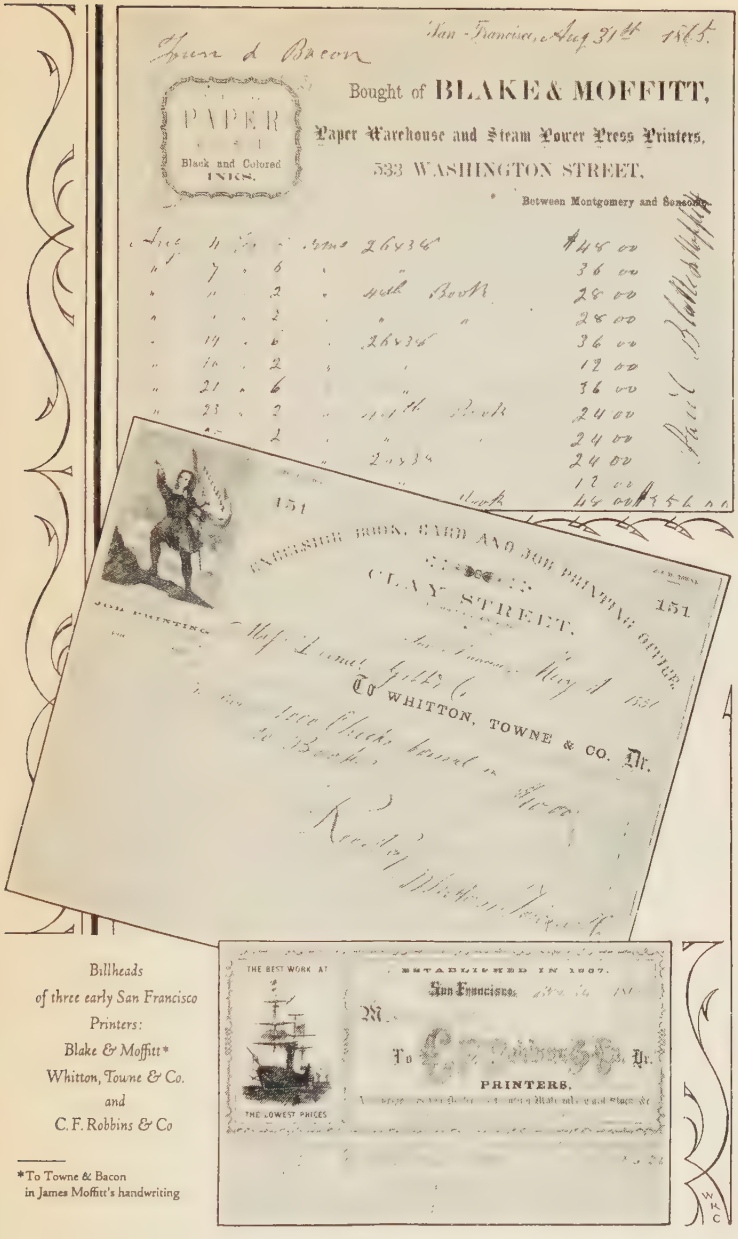
It is of interest to note that this Adams printing press which was mentioned as having been imported from San Francisco had been "hitherto used in the offices of Messrs. Whitton, Towne & Company of that city. The work done upon it in that office received a premium at the Mechanics Fair last year."—*Victoria Gazette*, July 24, 1858.

James W. Towne continued at Victoria until September 1st, when under the masthead of the paper, this change is noted:

"Mr. Abel Whitton, having purchased the interest of Messrs. Whitton, Towne & Company in *The Victoria Gazette* (heretofore represented by Mr. James W. Towne), the business of the paper will hereafter be conducted after the name and style of Abel Whitton Company."

On that date Whitton, Towne & Company was dissolved in San Francisco by the purchase of Mr. Whitton's share by Mr. Towne and Jacob Bacon, who had been with the firm for several years. The name was then changed to Towne & Bacon, otherwise known as the "Excelsior Printing Company," and was located at 536 Clay Street.

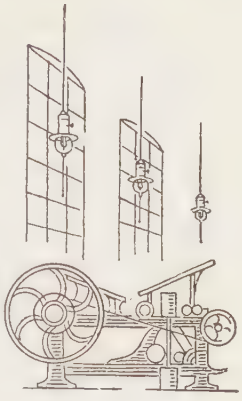
The old firm under the new title of Towne & Bacon continued with success. It became one of the important plants of the day and, fortunately enough, an interesting description of this shop has been preserved. Not only does it give an accurate picture of this plant, but it may be taken to typify an "up-to-date" printing establishment of the day. This account appears



Billheads
of three early San Francisco
Printers:
Blake & Moffitt*
Whitton, Towne & Co.
and
C. F. Robbins & Co

*To Towne & Bacon
in James Moffitt's handwriting

as one of the feature articles in the March, 1861, issue of a magazine, which for a period was regularly printed by Towne & Bacon, *The California Mountaineer*. The author begins by naïvely observing that the art of printing "has attained a degree of perfection among us that we are almost induced to believe affords but little room for improvement. In the pressroom of the public printing office at Washington, D. C., two hundred and ten reams, or upwards of one hundred thousand sheets can easily be printed in a day!"



Further on, he has this to say of Towne & Bacon:

"The office, built for an exhibition room and concert hall, occupies the second story of the splendid block at the corner of Clay, Sansome and Commercial Streets; it is admirably lighted, there being no less than eighteen windows, and every department is kept beautifully clean and neat. . . .

"On entering, we observed numerous samples of printing—mammoth posters, in colors, ornamental cards, etc. Drawers, filled with every description of job work, are conveniently at hand, for the examination of customers. In their presses, the firm have an eye to elegance of workmanship, as well as rapidity of execution. Two card presses, capable of throwing off 3,000 cards per hour; two Ruggles job presses, printing about 2,500 sheets; two of the celebrated Adams power presses—acknowledged to be the best machine for fine book work ever invented; one mammoth hand press, for large posters and colored bills; one smaller sized hand press, for printing large show cards; and a

powerful standing press, for dry-pressing the work—in order to remove the raised impression made by the types, and impart a finish and gloss to the printed sheets—enable the firm to execute any description of work desired, in the best manner. They have just received a splendid Gordon press, and have on the way from the East one of Hoe's fast cylinder presses, invaluable where work has to be executed with unusual rapidity. The larger presses are driven by a compactly built oscillating engine, working quietly in one corner of the spacious apartment.

"In the job department are more than four hundred different styles and sizes of type, requiring good taste on the part of the workmen to select those best adapted to the particular class of work. In the book and newspaper department, we found a most intelligent body of operatives, nimbly setting one by one the mystic type." . . .

Had this sketch been written a few years later the author might also have described the electrotype and stereotype foundry which Towne & Bacon installed in 1865, the first complete plant of its kind established in San Francisco. The equipment was the latest the East could provide and gave the firm a decided advantage over other printers. With the opening of trade foundries this department was sold to Painter & Company.

The sketch continues:

"The heads of this establishment are themselves practical printers, who are not afraid to *take hold* in true California style, when occasion requires; they employ about thirty men, but often, when pressed by some job requiring unusual haste, they put on many more; the size of their premises and their large fonts of book type giving a most material advantage in this re-

"In 1868 Blake, Robbins & Company was formed. It was strictly a paper house, the immediate forerunner of Blake, Moffitt & Towne."

"In 1880 Blake, Robbins & Company determined to enter the field of bag manufacturing, and installed a complete plant."

Taken from an old lithograph
showing offices and warehouse of Blake, Robbins & Company
located at 516 Sacramento Street

Interior of bag factory in lower panel

gard. Of the publications regularly issued from their office, we would mention *The California Mountaineer*, monthly; *The Bookseller*, monthly; *The San Francisco Medical Journal*, monthly; *Hutchings' California Magazine*, monthly; *The Evangel*, semi-monthly; *The Mercantile Gazette and Prices Current*, tri-monthly; *The Pacific*, weekly; and *The Pacific Methodist*, weekly.

"In addition to the regular work referred to, we found them engaged in turning out the fifteenth volume of 'Supreme Court Reports'; an illustrated work on the Honey Bee (by J. Harbison, Esq., of Sacramento); 'The First Annual Report of the California Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb,' and a number of pamphlets whose names we do not recall to mind.

"In order that they may more successfully compete with the East, or their enterprising brethren of the trade in San Francisco, they import their own paper and material. In an adjoining room of the same building we found piles of book, news and writing papers, cards and cardboard of every variety, and other material of daily use in their trade. . . .

"We believe there is not a single true Californian but will read this sketch with pleasure; the literature of the Pacific is yet in its infancy, but if we can judge from the power, vigor and excellence of our daily and weekly press, it is destined, at no distant day, to be read throughout the world. To none must we look for such a consummation with more attention than to the energetic, enterprising printer. Unless we are mistaken, the day *has arrived* when California can compete in this regard with any of her sister states. We have designers second to none, wood engravers of the very first degree of excellence, and printers

whose work is equal to anything we have ever seen. Let Californians, then, print, publish, design, illustrate, write and read their own books in the same proportion that they encourage any other praiseworthy national undertaking, and we will soon have a literature of which we can justly be proud."

Here, perhaps, is the origin of the "Buy at Home" movement; but who can deny that these were prophetic words?

San Francisco in those days was termed a "Printer's Paradise." Skilled workmen were scarce, wages and materials were high, and prices for printing correspondingly so. One Towne & Bacon letter written East in 1863 makes this offer:

"We shall feel under obligations, and will pay you any expense incurred, if you would procure for us by advertising or otherwise a good job printer. We want a man of some *originality;* one to do our *nice* work, as certificates of mining stock, fancy cards and labels set up for colors—cards, billheads and the best class of work done in an office. To such a man, who can show satisfactory evidence to you of his ability, we will guarantee a steady situation, as long as he wants to remain, ($30.00) thirty dollars per week. That is the regular rate of wages for job printers here, and they will probably continue at that figure several years."

An early copy of the *Daily Alta California* (June 12, 1850) contains an item relative to the high cost of printing materials. Things were doubtless in better shape in the sixties—the period we are now considering—but from all accounts the prices mentioned were not far out of line. It says:

"Some idea of the value of printing materials in this country may be derived from the sale of an invoice of presses and type

yesterday. Messrs. . . . disposed of an invoice . . . for the sum of $8,400. The cost in New York could not possibly have exceeded $2,000—a few kegs of printer's ink which is worth perhaps thirty cents per pound in New York, sold for $3.50 per pound."

The author of the sketch above quoted drew attention to a matter of special significance, that of importing paper. Blake & Moffitt, and Towne & Bacon, were printers, but from all early records available the importing and reselling of paper played an important part in the transactions of all pioneer printers, especially the larger plants. As an indication, Towne & Bacon's financial statement of December 31, 1864, is interesting. Sales of printing for the year amounted to $29,114.04 and the paper used $5,044.24, while the inventory of paper on hand was $7,698.52.

Although at first printers bought chiefly for their own requirements, it was not long before they were buying paper, as well as ink and other supplies, from one another. The printer with a good mill connection on cardboard was likely to find a ready market with his competitors, while he in turn might look to another when his supply of book or writing paper failed to last until the arrival of the next clipper ship. It was distinctly a sellers' market. In the striving between competitors to secure desirable sources of supply no records are more interesting, and in light of what later happened, more amusing, than the old letter files showing Blake & Moffitt and Towne & Bacon eagerly seeking to secure the agency of the same Eastern mill.

Blake & Moffitt were the first to advertise themselves as paper merchants. This they did in the San Francisco Directory of

1863-4, where they appear as "importers, printing papers and power press printers," located at 533 Washington Street. Their progress in this field was rapid, and in the Directory of 1865-6, they dropped their power-press classification in favor of "printing papers, inks, etc."

With Towne & Bacon the change to the paper business was not made as quickly or definitely. In the same Directory of 1865-6 their listing as a "paper warehouse" appeared, but it was secondary to their classification as steam power printers.

Their sales of paper were to other printers, who, rather than help build up the business of a competitor, confined their purchases to such items as could not be secured elsewhere. Towne & Bacon met this problem by making an arrangement with another printing house, C. F. Robbins & Company, concentrating on printing and C. F. Robbins & Company on paper. Thus the paper business of San Francisco became centered in the two firms of Blake & Moffitt and Charles F. Robbins & Company.

Charles F. Robbins, a native of Massachusetts, came to California in 1852. He took up printing in the office of James O'Meara (O'Meara & Painter), and his meeting there with James Moffitt was, in spite of being competitors for a number of years, the beginning of a long friendship.

In 1868 Blake, Robbins & Company was formed. It was strictly a paper house, the immediate forerunner of Blake, Moffitt & Towne, and was the result of what today would be termed a "merger" of the three firms—Blake & Moffitt, C. F. Robbins & Company, and Towne & Bacon. There were four partners, Francis Blake, James Moffitt, Charles F. Robbins and James W. Towne. Mr. Towne moved East with his family to East Orange,

Blake, Moffitt & Towne
San Francisco
Founded in 1855
Headquarters Division

Oakland Division

Sacramento Division

Fresno Division

New Jersey, to handle the affairs of the New York office. His former partner, Jacob Bacon, continued in the printing business on his own account under the name Bacon & Company, later known as the Bacon Printing Company.

Blake, Robbins & Company bore the title of "Importers & Jobbers, of Book, News, Writing and Wrapping Paper, Paper Bags, Card Stock, Straw Paper, Straw and Binders' Boards, Black and Colored Inks, Bronzes, etc." They were conveniently located near the center of the business district at 516 Sacramento and 519 Commercial Streets. The new firm was not a printing concern, but a paper house conducted by men of experience, whose integrity had gained the confidence of the trade.

The partners realized that in large measure their future rested upon securing desirable mill connections. The day of large scale production had not yet dawned and manufacturers were not troubled with problems of distribution. Demand was steady and year in, year out, their products flowed through regular channels. It was no easy matter to get the average mill to divert even a portion of its tonnage to a new firm in the Far West. "We have hertofore been guarded as to granting a credit in California," states an old letter from one of the mills, "as we consider the distance so great as to be beyond general mercantile supervision."

That Blake, Robbins & Company succeeded so well in face of these difficult trade conditions, was due not only to their energy, but to the confidence which the partners inspired in all with whom they came in contact.

It was in the interest of securing desirable new agencies that

the firm sent Mr. Blake on an extended trip to Europe in 1871. Results were gratifying. Through Blake, Robbins & Company, Pacific Coast paper buyers were enabled to buy the products of many of the leading English mills. In the meantime Mr. Towne, in the New York office, was establishing relations with eastern mills, many of whom—leaders in the manufacture of book, bonds and ledgers—still remain on the Company's books.

Satisfactory sources of supply, an ever-increasing demand, a knowledge of local conditions, and a close, friendly relationship with the trade were among the important factors which contributed to the sound, steady growth of Blake, Robbins & Company. Leadership once established, the firm took definite steps forward in expansion.

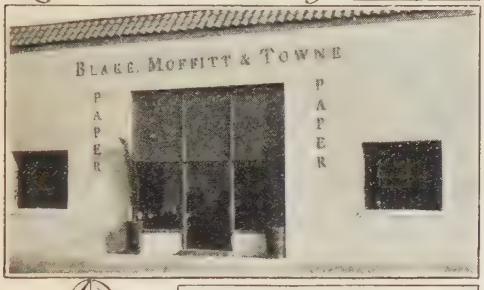
For example, the consumption of paper bags on the Coast was increasing each year, until in 1882 it reached an estimated total of 60,000,000 per year, having a value of $180,000, a considerable volume for those days. At that time the only local source of bags was the Lick Paper Mill at Alviso, which had been originally built as a flour mill in 1852 by James Lick.

In 1880 Blake, Robbins & Company determined to enter the field of bag manufacturing, and installed a complete plant. The venture proved successful from the start and in a short time an excellent trade had been developed up and down the Pacific Coast.

But not alone in bags were the demands of the paper buyers of the Far West increasing. Here are some interesting figures of

Blake, Moffitt & Towne, Los Angeles
showing new warehouse in rear

The first Los Angeles store
when Division was opened in 1891



Long Beach Division

San Diego Division

the period relative to the paper industry in general on the Pacific Coast:

"The annual production of paper on the Coast is about 1,800 tons of printing, worth at wholesale $160 per ton; 1,000 tons of manila, sold for $180 per ton; and 2,400 tons of straw wrapping and 300 tons of pasteboard, each sold at $60 per ton: making in all 5,500 tons, worth $630,000. The annual consumption is more than 6,000 tons of printing, 2,500 tons of wrapping, 1,300 tons of manila, and 750 tons of pasteboard, leaving 5,000 tons to be supplied by the Eastern States. . . . No writing paper is manufactured on the Coast, and the imports of that article probably amount to $350,000 annually, four-fifths being received at San Francisco. The value of the envelopes consumed yearly is about $150,000 or, at $4.00 per 1,000, 25 to each inhabitant of the Coast north of Mexico. . . ."—John H. Hittell, "The Commerce and Industries of the Pacific Coast of North America."

Sharing the general growth and prosperity of the Coast was the Pacific Northwest, where the city of Portland, Oregon, was fast assuming a dominant position. Ever since their establishment, Blake, Robbins & Company had enjoyed an active business with Portland and in November, 1883, after carefully studying the market, they opened a branch there. This was the first branch, the beginning of a coast-wide chain which today numbers seventeen divisions. The Portland organization was formed as a partnership under the name of Blake, Robbins, McFall & Company, later becoming Blake, McFall Company.

Although the Blake, Robbins payroll judged by today's standards, was not impressive, it contained in addition to the

partners the names of a number who made their mark in the paper trade. Among them was Michael J. McDonald, who had been with the Company since boyhood and was serving as head salesman when tragedy ended a promising career. His murder so aroused public resentment that the facts are worth retelling.

Few salesmen were more popular than McDonald. In addition to his knowledge of paper gained through many years' experience, he had a personality which inspired confidence and respect. To quote the *News Letter*, "people would walk twenty blocks to give their business to genial, generous-hearted 'Mike'."

About four o'clock on the afternoon of October 6, 1880. McDonald met an acquaintance, William Barrington, and invited him into a saloon at 62 Halleck Street, known as "Billy's Bureau," and—let the account in the *Daily Alta* tell the rest:

"The barkeeper, while engaged in filling their order, stooped down for some sugar, when he was startled by the loud report of a pistol, followed by a cry and the fall of a shattered mirror. Upon looking across the counter, he saw Barrington pointing a self-cocking English bulldog pistol at McDonald, and, just as the latter dodged down around the end of the counter he fired another shot. The barkeeper and all present attempted a hasty departure, while McDonald, who had been hit twice, dodged around behind the counter and endeavored to run down stairs to the wine cellar. When at the back of the counter, Barrington leaned over, and, aiming straight at McDonald's back, fired a third shot, and McDonald rolled down stairs and immediately expired. The shocking tragedy was over in a few seconds. . . ."

Barrington was placed under arrest and found to be insane, or at least subject to fits of insanity.

But "Mike" was gone and the entire community was aroused. The press made a great deal of the affair. On October 9th, the day before the funeral, the *News Letter* came out with a stirring editorial under the caption, "More Hemp Needed." It deplored the "impunity with which murder can be committed in San Francisco" and the fact that "the plea of insanity has been used systematically as a cloak for crime in California."

The funeral was attended by a large body of men prominent in the city's business life. The announcement, signed by a Committee of Friends, forty-five in number, reads as follows:

"The funeral of our most estimable friend, Michael J. McDonald, who was brutally murdered on Wednesday last, will take place on Sunday, at 2 P.M., from Shield's Building, No. 32 O'Farrell Street.

"All who are engaged in the printing business are requested to join the procession in a body, not alone to show their great respect for the deceased, but to put on record a stinging protest against the lax administration of justice which encourages murder by allowing feigned insanity as an excuse for it.

"He numbered among his friends all who knew him. He was constantly on the lookout for opportunity to do good. He caused sunshine always, and gloom never, by his presence; and the hand of the assassin might have fallen more lightly on the community had it selected almost any other victim. His charity was the cause of his death.

HORACE FLETCHER	S. E. DUTTON	DWIGHT GERMAIN
EDWARD F. BOSQUI	G. W. PERKINS	MUNROE MILLER
FRANCIS BLAKE	GEO. FAULKNER	A. MORT. HEPBURN
C. A. MURDOCK & CO.	T. J. PETTIT	JOHN DIXON

E. A. PEPLOW	C. McCORMICK	W. J. MUNCEY
J. J. PALMER	JAMES E. SHEAN	A. W. STUART
S. L. EVERETT	M. SCHMIDT	JAS. SUTCLIFF
BACON & CO.	CHARLES F. ROBBINS	CON. McCOLGAN
P. J. THOMAS	JAMES MOFFITT	J. APPLE
GEORGE SPAULDING	B. F. STERETT	J. J. EVANS
EDWARD DENNY & CO.	W. M. HINTON	C. C. RUSS
JAS. CUNNINGHAM	J. B. PAINTER	J. M. CRANE
E. B. CURTISS	W. H. MURRAY	J. J. FRANK
S. B. WELCH	S. P. SMILEY	GEO. E. DAVIS
COL. JAS. WITHINGTON	J. R. BRODIE & CO.	J. LYONS

Committee of Friends"

In 1884 the first break among the four partners came in the death, on June 11th, of Charles F. Robbins at the age of fifty-three. In addition to his regular activity in the paper business, he had, during the last year of his life, served as a member of the Board of State Prison Directors.

In the notice sent out to the trade, announcement was made of the dissolution of Blake, Robbins & Company on December 31, 1884, and also of the fact that:

"The undersigned beg to state that they will continue the business of the late firm, and hope to merit a continuance of the many favors heretofore extended thereto.

BLAKE, MOFFITT & TOWNE

San Francisco, January 1st, 1885"

HERE, then, is the beginning of the corporate name of Blake, Moffitt & Towne, a name which is now forty-five years old, but an institution which began seventy-five years ago when the presses of Blake & Moffitt started turning in 1855.

The officers of the new corporation were Francis Blake, president, James Moffitt, vice-president, while for the office of secretary-treasurer a new name appeared—that of Arthur G. Towne, eldest son of the founder, James W. Towne.

Arthur G. Towne was born in San Francisco in 1856 and there spent his early boyhood. In 1868 his parents left San Francisco and took up their residence in East Orange, New Jersey. There the young man completed school, and entered the employ of a printer in New York City. The growing importance of the paper business which his father helped to found, led him, while still in his twenties, to return to San Francisco. He had therefore several years' experience in the paper business when the new Company was organized.

In James Moffitt, the firm had a strong leader. While his activities were for the best part confined to the business world, the records show that there was at least one occasion when his leadership was demonstrated in striking manner on the baseball diamond. The full account, appearing in the papers of March 14, 1886, is as follows:

"A notable game of baseball was played at the Race Track yesterday, the respective nines being captained by two of San Francisco's capitalists—Captain James Moffitt, of the firm of Blake, Moffitt & Towne, and Captain Joseph Britton, of Britton & Rey. The feeling of rivalry as to supremacy on the diamond was brought to a climax by a wager of ten dollars. The

nines were selected from the employees of the two firms. These preliminaries being arranged satisfactorily, the meeting was held yesterday morning, when it was discovered that no bats were supplied. Being but novices at the game, probably the captains thought that the adjacent fence would supply pickets enough for bats. A suggestion that they send into town and procure paper bags for bases was frowned down by the Moffitts. Fortunately, one of the partners had sent on its way an express wagon containing all of the paraphernalia, together with a substantial lunch, which arrived in due season and caused Captain Britton's anxious look to change into a beaming expression of confident victory. The Moffitts went to the bat, and each man scored a run except the renowned Captain, whose sole endeavor seemed to be to evade the balls aimed at his body by the pitcher, who, it was slyly intimated, was trying to get even with the 'boss.' On the Brittons taking the bat, but two runs were made, causing Captain Joe to stroke his chin and look serious, the game alternating in favor of one side and the other till the eighth inning, when the Moffitts forged ahead, and won in the ninth by three points, the score being 30 to 27."

Three years of progress followed the incorporation of Blake, Moffitt & Towne, but on January 6, 1888, the Company was shocked by the sudden death of Francis Blake. His end came while out for an evening drive in his buggy. Leaving his home in Oakland he had proceeded but a short distance toward Fruitvale when he was overcome by a heart attack. As the buggy sped by he was seen slumped down in his seat, his head dropped to one side. Later, his body was found lying on the pavement.

"His connection with us covered a period of nearly thirty-three years," read the announcement sent out by the Company to its friends and customers. The press referred to him as "a man of sterling qualities" and observed that the news of his death had "caused a deep and universal sorrow."

John O'Meara, one of his contemporaries in the early days of San Francisco printing, described him as "always sedate and sedulous in his pressroom, kind and considerate, banking character as he progressed in wealth." A kindly, friendly man, he had true dignity in the better sense of the word. He was the type of the office executive and possessed of marked ability. In addition to his interests in the Company, he served for years as a director of the Sun Insurance Company and of the Oakland Bank of Savings. In 1857 he was a member of the Board of Education of the City of San Francisco.

Upon Mr. Blake's death, James Moffitt became president of the Company, a position he was to hold for eighteen years. His elder son, James K. Moffitt, after graduating from the University of California in 1886, had entered the Company's employ as a salesman, but events in the business soon called him to Los Angeles.

The ledgers of 1884 show that on June 16th, Henry Glass, a bookbinder in Los Angeles, opened an account with Blake, Robbins & Company. This in itself was nothing of importance —the account was small and was only one of a considerable number appearing on the "country books." However, to the future of the Company it was full of significance. In September, 1886, the bookbindery became "Cooke & Wiseman, suc-

cessors to Henry Glass," and then later, simply "George W. Cooke & Company."

Cooke had many friends, he knew his trade and prospered. The City of Los Angeles was already launched upon a period of expansion never equalled in our country. In this rapid growth Cooke saw opportunity, and made application to be appointed agent in Los Angeles for Blake, Moffitt & Towne. The agency was established, but Cooke found it difficult to keep up with the demands of the growing city and it became necessary for the Company to enter the field directly. This was done on January 2, 1891.

Cooke remained in charge until his death later in the same year and James K. Moffitt was then sent from San Francisco to take charge of the Company's affairs. The Los Angeles Division at the time occupied a small, two-story building at 205 North Los Angeles Street. The organization was composed of seven men. Two horse-drawn wagons were sufficient to make regular deliveries through the city.

James K. Moffitt continued as manager at Los Angeles for three years, but in October, 1894, accepted a position with the First National Bank of San Francisco, now the Crocker First National Bank. His father was a director of this institution and one of its founders as well as one of its principal stockholders. While his new duties withdrew him from the paper business, he has always continued his active interest in the affairs of the Corporation, and today serves as its president.

Care and judgment were exercised in the selection of a manager to succeed James K. Moffitt. Choice rested upon Ernest H. Greppin, who, although only twenty-six years of age, could

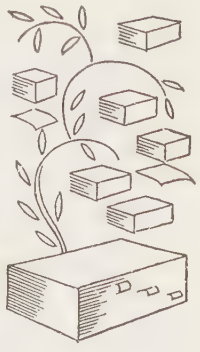
Blake, Moffitt & Towne
Portland

Boise Division

Medford Division

Salem Division

show a record of accomplishment in the paper business. Coming from St. Louis six years before, he had taken a position with a San Francisco paper house where his knowledge and ability were soon recognized. Blake, Moffitt & Towne had chosen wisely. The Los Angeles house was in strong and capable hands.



Due to the growth of business it now became necessary to strengthen the Portland Division of the Company. On September 21, 1895, Blake, McFall Company was incorporated in the State of Oregon and C. D. Bruun, who had been with the San Francisco house, was sent to assist the management. Shortly afterward he became president of the Company.

Opportunities were developing in the Northwest and the Portland house was encouraged by headquarters to take advantage of them. Seattle was growing rapidly as the base of operations for the Alaska-Yukon gold mines and, in addition, the back country, rich in lumber and grain, poured its treasure out to the world through the city's splendid harbor.

After surveying the territory it was determined to locate a Division in Seattle, and on March 30, 1900, the American Paper Company was formed, and E. P. Jones placed in charge. Thus the turn of the century found Blake, Moffitt & Towne represented in four of the principal cities of the Pacific Coast.

In the same year, 1900, Printer's Day, an annual occasion, was held in San Francisco. As was the custom, an elaborate souvenir program was printed giving the principal events inter-

spersed with the advertising messages of various supply houses. In the Blake, Moffitt & Towne advertisement the Company declared its policy in a statement which has stood the test of time. It holds even today. Since it helps to complete the picture of the institution, it bears repetition:

"There are but a few houses in the paper trade of the United States that can point to a longer or more honorable business career than Messrs. Blake, Moffitt & Towne. The policy of the house has always been to deal liberally and fairly with all its patrons, to sell only reliable papers, and to ignore all irregular goods."

At this time the San Francisco house was located at 55 First Street in the Founder's Block. Here business was being carried on when the great fire of 1906 swept the city, reducing the business section to ashes.

In characteristic style—as pioneers again—plans were under way at once for the future. A temporary location on Eleventh Street between Broadway and Franklin was made ready in Oakland, stocks were rushed from Los Angeles and Portland, and Blake, Moffitt & Towne was again ready to serve its friends and customers.

On October 25th of that year, James Moffitt, then almost eighty years of age, died in Oakland after an illness of but a few days. His death cast a shadow of sorrow not only over his associates in the paper business and his many friends in the trade, but throughout the entire business world in which his interests were many and varied. The following editorial appeared in the *Oakland Tribune* on the day after his death:

San Jose
one of the Northern California
Divisions

Phoenix Division

Tucson Division

James Moffitt—Good Citizen

"A long life of honor, usefulness and business probity closed with the decease of James Moffitt. No reproach ever touched his character or reputation as a merchant. The title of good citizen had a definite and luminous meaning when applied to him, for he was the embodiment of good citizenship. In his business career he exemplified plain old-fashioned upright methods of dealing and his success in the mercantile business is a shining proof that those methods have lost none of their potency in winning the substantial rewards that are due in the business world. His success in life is to be directly ascribed to his latent industry and strict integrity. He never speculated. He never took advantage of anybody. He never played sharp tricks on his customers or misled anybody about the quality of the goods he sold. He scorned the faking methods so prevalent in the business world today and to the last clung tenaciously to the standards he set for himself in early life and from which he never deviated. Mr. Moffitt began life as a printer at the case but died at the head of a great mercantile house and a financial power. He came to San Francisco in early days, without friends and little money, seeking employment and rose to be one of the merchant princes of the city. Yet his simple tastes and plain manners abode with him in prosperity and adversity. He was a good citizen and as a merchant his word was as good as his bond all his days. He asked nothing that was not his due and never sought honors, yet honors and wealth came to him in abundance. His old age was crowned with the respect of all men and comforted by children worthy of such a sire. Men of his fine sturdy type are the saving grace of society. The world would be

better and business cleaner if there were more James Moffitts among us."

In the same newspaper the following facts connected with his long and interesting career are related:

"Mr. Moffitt's activities in San Francisco, Oakland and throughout the Coast were many and engrossing. The firm maintains branches at Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle and Spokane. Mr. Moffitt was a director of the First National Bank and of the Mutual Savings Bank of San Francisco since their foundation. He was senior director of the Oakland Bank of Savings, the Oakland Gas Light & Heat Company and many other corporations about the Bay.

"One of the enterprises in which he early embarked and of which he was justly proud was his association with Andrew S. Hallidie, Joseph Britton and Henry L. Davis in the building of the cable railroad up Clay Street in San Francisco, a remarkable feat for those days and all the more remarkable because it was the first cable line of the kind built in the world, and because the task was successfully accomplished. . . .

"Mr. Moffitt, however, never filled or sought a political office. He was a staunch Fremont Republican when those principles prevailed but he was, in reality, politically an independent in the best sense of the term. . . .

"Mr. Moffitt although a man of large means was nevertheless simple and unassuming in tastes and demeanor. For those whom he loved, however, in the family circle there was nothing left undone which would tend to their happiness.

"He was a man of many and varied interests and business responsibilities onerous to bear but he addressed himself to his

work with a simple vigor and directness which enabled him to succeed where others would have met obstacles insurmountable.

"There was in him no desire to parade his success before the public nor to make vulgar display of achievements accomplished in the face of strong and bitter competition.

"In his later life as well as in his earlier days he conducted his affairs in a direct, thorough and honest manner which secured its own reward.

"His manner and methods brought to him abundant patronage, liberal returns and undying friendship. When he found a friend he retained and endeared himself to him all the more during their reciprocal attachment. . . . "

Several important changes in the Company were effected in 1907. In February a move was made from the temporary office in Oakland to more adequate quarters in San Francisco. These consisted of a large concrete building on Fourth Street extending from Illinois to Michigan Streets. Four years later the final move was made to a more central location at 41 First Street, near the old location occupied before the fire.

Changes were also made in the directorate. Arthur G. Towne was elected president to fill the vacancy caused by the death of James Moffitt, James K. Moffitt, vice-president, and William B. Maxwell, secretary-treasurer, a position he holds today, having just completed his forty-fifth year in the service of the Company. E. H. Greppin, manager of the Los Angeles Division, was made a member of the board of directors. Under his leadership marked progress was being made in Southern California.

Meanwhile changes were taking place in the Northwest. Otto W. Mielke, who today has charge of the Company's in-

terests in the North, had joined the organization in 1899 and had served as its vice-president since 1906. In 1908 he was appointed manager of the American Paper Company at Seattle.

One of the members of the Seattle staff at the time was Frank E. Jeffries, who had previously been in the paper business in Minneapolis. Upon the establishment of a branch house at Tacoma on September 1, 1910, he was appointed manager. The Tacoma Paper & Stationery Company, as it was named, has been celebrating not only its twentieth milestone, but the seventy-fifth anniversary of the parent organization. Tacoma has known only one manager—Frank Jeffries.

* * *

The World War is so recent and so much has been written about conditions during that period that they require no special comment. As with all major industries, labor and raw materials used in the manufacture of paper rapidly advanced in price. The abnormal demand forced many mills to prorate their output among their distributors. With the available tonnage limited, Blake, Moffitt & Towne, following the policy of business houses of standing, made every effort to care first for the requirements of old customers.

At that time the Corporation, mindful of the interests of its employees and their dependents, concluded arrangements for group insurance. Under this plan the life of each employee who has been with the house for one year or over, is automatically insured by the Company.

On July 3, 1917, James W. Towne, the last surviving founder of the Company, died at his home in East Orange, New Jersey, at the age of 88 years. Toward the close of his career he had

Seattle Division of
Blake, Moffitt & Towne

Tacoma Paper & Stationery Co
Division

Yakima Division

retired from active business, resigning as a member of the board of directors in 1908. Mr. Towne was a strong, quiet, conservative man with clear insight, good judgment, deep convictions and kindly nature. In speaking of him, an executive of one of the mills, who had known him for 35 years, said:

"He was a gentleman of the old school, always so genial and kindly. While exacting in business deals, the unfailing courtesy he always showed, made association with him a pleasure . . . "

While carrying on his activities Mr. Towne had become interested in another business enterprise of importance. One of the prominent early mill connections he established was with the Whiting Paper Company founded by William Whiting. Through their close business relationship the two men became well acquainted, and in 1887 purchased the National Blank Book Company of Holyoke, Massachusetts. The venture proved successful and in a short time Mr. Towne succeeded Mr. Whiting as president. Today Mr. Towne's three sons, Frank B., Edward S., Joseph M., and a grandson, Richard P. Towne conduct the National's affairs.

The decade following the war has been marked by steady growth and expansion of Blake, Moffitt & Towne. In the more important cities of the Coast new divisions have been opened in order more adequately to care for the requirements of the trade. Wherever necessary, warehouse facilities have been enlarged and improved. It has been a policy of keeping pace with progress, of growing with the West.

Under E. H. Greppin's direction the Los Angeles house placed sales offices at San Diego and at Phoenix. At the outset no warehouse stock was carried, and these points did not become regu-

lar divisions until later. Unfortunately Mr. Greppin was not to see the completion of these plans. On September 5, 1922, he died at the age of 54. For over twenty-seven years he had been with the Company as manager of the Los Angeles house. During that time great progress had been made and a strong and efficient organization built up. His loss was keenly felt; his presence was missed alike by employees, customers and mill friends.

F. M. Couch was then appointed manager. He had entered the Los Angeles organization in 1909 and became its credit manager. For many years he had been active in the work of the Credit Men's Association, having served as the president of the Los Angeles chapter. He was also for two years a director of the National Association. In March, 1923, he became a member of the board of directors of Blake, Moffitt & Towne and later was elected vice-president.

The Los Angeles Division had now outgrown its quarters and was in need of additional space. A parcel of property in the rear of the Los Angeles Street location was secured, and plans were prepared for a reinforced concrete building of four stories and basement. On January 19, 1924, A. G. Towne, president of the Company, turned the first spade of earth. That evening, over three hundred members of the Blake, Moffitt & Towne organization of Los Angeles sat down to dinner in honor of the event and were congratulated on their progress by James K. Moffitt, the Company's first manager at Los Angeles.

On October 10th, Mr. Couch issued an invitation to friends and customers of the house and mill executives to attend the formal opening of the new warehouse. Many came and were shown a modern and complete plant with space for huge stocks

of merchandise and a loading arcade to accommodate the large fleet of delivery trucks maintained by this Division.

Another event that year also attracted attention. By the purchase of the Richardson, Case Paper Company of Sacramento, on April 16th, the Sacramento Division was established. The quarters occupied at 1021 Front Street were inadequate to handle the business of this important market center and plans were made for a new building at 1115 Front Street. The doors of the new building were opened on August 27, 1927.

In 1926 the Oakland Division was established to serve the East Bay region. This area was enjoying a remarkable growth, both commercially and industrially, and warranted all the attention that a local division could give. The first location was at Third and Jefferson Streets, but increase of business made a move necessary to a new and larger building at Sixth and Webster Streets.

Somewhat later in the same year a division was established at Fresno, the center of the fertile San Joaquin Valley. In addition to handling the regular line, the Fresno Division is an important factor in the sale of papers and paper products used in the fruit packing industry. At first in temporary quarters, this division was later housed in an attractive new building at 333 Van Ness Avenue, one of the main arteries of the city.

San Jose, the market center of the Santa Clara Valley, was selected as the next point for a new division. A building specially constructed for its use was completed in May, 1928. "La Fiesta de las Rosas," the colorful civic celebration observed each year in San Jose, was made the occasion for the formal opening of the new building.

About this time illness forced Arthur G. Towne, for twenty years president of the Corporation, to retire from active business. On April 4, 1930, he died at the age of 73 years. During all his career Mr. Towne lived up to the best traditions of the founders of the Company. His death was made the occasion of a resolution adopted by the Pacific States Paper Trade Association reading as follows:

"Arthur G. Towne was one of the original organizers of this Association, attended its first meeting and was a regular attendant at all its subsequent meetings until his late illness. His passing on removes from our membership and from the paper industry one of its best known members and a pioneer among its present members. His Company, of which he was president for twenty years, is one of the most prominent in the United States and a potent factor on this Coast and in this Association.

"Mr. Towne has been greatly missed for the past few years by those active in association work. He was of a rather retiring disposition, not given to public talking, but was well grounded in the principles and practices of paper merchandising.

"He was a man of strict integrity, an upright citizen, a tenacious friend with a long memory for what he considered unfair practices. He was a connecting link between a few very early founders of the paper business and the present extensive and expansive ownership. He was an honor to our Association and his absence is a distinct loss in our deliberations. His keen but quiet sense of humor and his rather distinctive expression of it were relished by his intimate acquaintances. He took a lively interest in public affairs and was a good judge of men and measures. He always stood firmly for the right as he saw it."

James K. Moffitt, who as vice-president was always closely associated with Mr. Towne in the conduct of the business, was elected president upon the latter's retirement. Despite his many other activities, Mr. Moffitt has always devoted a large part of his time to the paper business. In addition to being president of the Company, he is chairman of the executive committee of the Crocker First National Bank of San Francisco, regent of the University of California, and director of a number of corporations in San Francisco.

Dr. Herbert C. Moffitt, another son of the founder, serves as a director of the Corporation. He is recognized both in this country and abroad for his achievements in the field of medical science. For a number of years he served as Dean of the University of California Medical School and Professor of Medicine. His son, James Moffitt, one of the third generation, has charge of the coarse paper department of the San Francisco Division.

William B. Maxwell, secretary-treasurer of the Company, has been in its service for forty-five years. Entering the firm as a boy, he has worked up to the office of trust which he has held for nearly twenty-four years. During this time he has played an important part in helping to shape the policies of the Corporation. For many years he has been active in the work of the Board of Trade of San Francisco, serving as director since 1916. He was president of the organization in 1923-24 and has been treasurer since 1926. His work in connection with the San Francisco Association of Credit Men has covered a period of over twenty years as director and treasurer.

Serving as first vice-president is James W. Towne, elder son of Arthur G. Towne, and a representative of the third generation.

Prior to assuming his present duties in connection with the general affairs of the Corporation, he was in charge of the purchasing department, carrying on the work of centralization of purchases and of standardization of lines.

Arthur W. Towne, the younger son, a director of the Corporation, is in charge of the Company's sales promotion and advertising.

At the close of 1925, O. W. Mielke, who, since 1906, had been vice-president of Blake, McFall Company of Portland, succeeded C. D. Bruun as president. Mr. Mielke, with headquarters in Portland, is in charge of the Blake, Moffitt & Towne interests throughout the Northwest, a territory which today includes seven Divisions located in the States of Oregon, Washington and Idaho. The corporate title was at this time changed to Blake, Moffitt & Towne. The Portland Division occupies a building of four stories and basement, strategically located at the end of the Burnside Bridge, at East Third and Ankeny Streets.

In 1927 two new divisions were opened by Mr. Mielke as branches of the Portland house. One at Boise to care for business in Idaho, marking the fifth State on the Pacific Coast in which the Company is represented, and the other at Salem, capital of the State of Oregon. Still another branch was opened at Medford in 1929, the third point in Oregon served from local warehouse stocks.

Until 1924 the American Paper Company had been functioning at Seattle as one of the Company's divisions, but in that

year became the Mutual Paper Corporation. In July, 1928, however, it again joined the chain, and the name changed to Blake, Moffitt & Towne. The new Company is headed by O. W. Mielke, president and J. W. Thompson, vice-president and manager. Mr. Thompson had been with the Seattle organization for twenty years, in addition to which he had had some seven years' experience in paper manufacturing in the East. The trade knew "Jack" Thompson well and welcomed the announcement of his appointment. Seattle is responsible for the opening, on July 10, 1930, of the youngest division at Yakima, Washington, center of a rich agricultural district specializing in apple growing.

In 1929 expansion plans in the Los Angeles territory resulted in the opening of a division at Long Beach, one of the fastest growing cities in the country.

At the same time, in order to cover the Arizona trade more intensively, a division was opened at Tucson. Since the establishment of the Phoenix Division a few years before, business in the State had been growing. On October 8, 1927, Blake, Moffitt & Towne of Arizona was incorporated, and E. A. Doran, who had been largely responsible for the development of this territory and who at the time was manager of the country sales and coarse paper departments of the Los Angeles Division, was made president.

In addition to his duties as head of the Arizona Corporation, E. A. Doran was, in 1928, elected vice-president of the parent organization and moved to San Francisco to take charge of the purchasing department and to handle the sales of the San Francisco and Northern California divisions. Mr. Doran has just

completed his seventeenth year in the organization, prior to which he had been in the paper business in the East.

Many changes have recently been taking place in the paper industry. Both the uses to which papers and paper products have been put and the variety of items carried in stock have greatly increased. As evidence of these facts may be cited the following:

For many years a book was either printed on the usual grade of machine finished book paper, or, if it were of a de luxe nature, on an imported handmade stock. In recent years a great number of lines possessing beautiful textures and finishes have been developed, and while machine made, have true quality and permanence due to their strong and lasting rag fibre.

There are also the advertisers who desire to present their story in the most attractive manner. As a result, the vogue for colorful and unusual papers has greatly increased. Progressive paper merchants, in anticipation of this demand, have added many new items to their lines. By way of illustration, ten years ago the largest single line carried by Blake, Moffitt & Towne contained forty-two items, today one of the newer lines has two hundred and thirty-eight items, over five times as many. Most of these lines are manufactured either three thousand or two thousand miles away, on the Atlantic Seaboard, or in the Central West. This fact explains the need that a large distributing organization such as Blake, Moffitt & Towne has for the immense warehouse space contained in its seventeen divisions. It is an assurance to the trade that stock is on hand ready for immediate delivery.

Each year sees new uses for paper. The fruit packing industry, whose success depends upon fruit shipments reaching Eastern

markets in the best possible condition, is an illustration. With an alert attitude and wide experience the Company has been responsible for the development of many new methods for employing paper or paper products in this field.

* * *

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS is a long period to test the effectiveness of an organization. That Blake, Moffitt & Towne has succeeded over the years and through all manner of changing conditions is due perhaps more than anything else to its avowed policy, expressed in the "Printer's Day" Program of thirty years ago, "to deal liberally and fairly with all its patrons, to sell only reliable papers, and to ignore all irregular goods."

"The main scratch for paper" which the Reverend Walter Colton found necessary in the publication of his newspaper *The Californian*, back in 1846, has long since been over. We have seen how but a few years later the foundation stones of the West's oldest paper house were set firmly in place. Today that same pioneer institution, grown to an organization with seventeen divisions, offers Pacific Coast paper buyers every conceivable kind of paper, from newsprint to Crane's bond, from dainty announcements to heavy duty wrapping papers.

Naturally everyone connected with the institution takes pride in this significant milestone. However, there is too much of the Pioneer Spirit moving through the record to allow one to be content to rest upon past accomplishment. As the Anniversary Year draws to a close, the present organization looks forward to the future with the inspiration of a rich heritage.

75th
BLAKE, MOFFITT & TOWNE
1855
1930
PAPER
ANNIVERSARY

THIS BOOK

has been made by Blake, Moffitt & Towne for its friends to mark the completion of seventy-five years in the paper business on the Pacific Coast.

Papers used are Crane's Olde Book for the letterpress; Cloudweave Book for the illustrations, and Italian Pressed for the cover.

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